

# "SOURDOUGHS" OF CONGRESS

Three Men Now in Congress Were Pioneers in Alaska—They Braved the Dangers and Hardships of Those Early Days. Senator Pittman of Nevada, Senator Lane of Oregon, Representative White of Ohio and Delegate Wickersham Were Once Real "Sourdoughs."

Special Correspondence  
WASHINGTON, D. C., 1914.



Thousands of man-hungry pioneers poured into Alaska, drawn by the lure of new-found gold. When death-dealing Chilkoot and White Horse opened perilous trailways into the new bonanza, when the untamed, hidden valleys of the new cold land knew the camp gleams of prospectors who gutted the beds of whispering virgin creeks and then fought their way "out side" with their precious dust and nuggets, through storm swirl and disease and madness, three men of political destiny were among that arctic brotherhood.

Today all of them—"Sourdoughs," Alaska pioneers, to the very bone—are contemporaries in Congress. They are Senator Key Pittman of Nevada, Senator Harry Lane of Oregon and Representative George White of Ohio—to say nothing of James Wickersham, delegate from the big land up yonder, who got to Nome in 1900 just in time to officiate as district judge, in the final round of the grafters which Key Pittman, as first district attorney of that troubled settlement, had so well commenced.

The present "Gentleman from Nevada" and the "Gentleman from Ohio" both brought out tidy golden stakes from the wilderness. "The Gentleman from Oregon" did not. But all of them brought back "pokes" full of rich experience, paid for in muscle, toil, daring and starvation. When and where they still dream dreams of bacon and beans, placers, bench claims high above Discovery creek and of the long-gone "Dawson days," with its sin and blase, and the town all open wide! Tales they can tell of the long, slow, danger-ridden march "inside," when arctic death ran trace-tight with each sled leader and dog-team dashes to new strikes through maddening Yukon nights; of tented towns where the glare of the tramphone drowned the click of nervous roulette and the clatter of the faro dealer's hand, and of the Midas months, when the Argonauts of the north had nothing to eat—save gold!

Key Pittman's experiences alone would fill volumes. Every phase of gold-camp life is a familiar story to him, for he ran the gamut of all the wild new land had to offer in adventure and peril and romance, finally bringing away with him a wife. She was Miss Minnie Gates, who made the famous dog-team dash from Dawson City to Nome, across 2,000 miles of frozen wilderness, shortly before her marriage.

When Senator Pittman, who had been engaged in the unsuccess practice of law near Seattle, sold his law office and came west, he was just twenty-two years old. A small inheritance, a tabular client, and a few hundred dollars, Alaska gold camps, rich in promise, lay ahead. Skagway, Chilkoot pass and the long trail to Lake Bennett gave the young adventurer little trouble, until he and his partner, one Jim Leash, found their horse rapids. And that was where Key Pittman's northern days began, for in the morning, heedless of fellow-travelers who were making a portage of their boats, the young lawyer and his partner boyishly shoved on and headed for the frothing shovelled pool.

The roar of the water rushing into the gorge, which were sent from the bank, but both the youths had caught the import of the yell.

"I'll tote no more outfits on land," young Pittman growled.

"That's the way," he felt about it," Leash replied, and then they were in for it.

"The foam began to fly. It was soon so thick I could not see the bow of the boat," Senator Pittman declares. "Jim would shout back directions to me. 'A little to right,' or 'hard left!'" and I blindly obeying, working the steering oar, blindly guided the barge.

"The boat swept to the rim of the rapids. It paused for an instant, shaking as a dog shakes when he comes from the water. Then it took the seven-foot plunge over the first of the rapids, like a diver. My oar snapped. But by that time we were well out of danger, and for the first time a 'Chechako'—tenderfoot—ran the rapids."

Walking back up the shore, Pittman and his partner repeated the performance half a dozen times, bringing other boats through at a profit of about \$75 for each trip.

But in spite of the money he had made, the young lawyer had only a lonely tent piece in addition to his half a ton of grub when long afterward he arrived in Dawson City.

"Drinks were a dollar apiece, too," said the senator, recalling his plight. "That's poverty."

For the next two years young Pittman attended strictly to placer mining, after having gotten a start by chopping wood at \$30 a cord. His mining proved successful. He staked many claims which paid well, and one of them he sold for \$15,000.

But the joys of placer mining paled, and he finally started for Nome, 2,000 miles away, over trails that would turn



JAMES WICKERSHAM, NOW DELEGATE FROM ALASKA, JUST OFF THE TRAIL

the hearts of any man, there to resume his long-neglected practice of law. When he reached Nome he picked out as the site of his office a location on the seaward side of the beach. But the military governor had given orders that all buildings should be erected on the seaward side. Yet small things like governor's orders did not daunt the young attorney.

Thereupon he constructed his shack on the seaward side, waiting his chance one dark night, boldly moved the whole building to the coveted landward side, where the military squire, glad of the shelter it afforded him, concluded that his orders prohibited anybody from building there, but did not command him to tear down anything which was built, and so the shack remained.

He soon became well known as a legal light, and he was frequently called upon to defend prisoners whose innocence was a matter of great doubt. Such an one was Red Ben, hanger-on of one of the big gambling emporiums.

The story is told that one day a man who is now a famous author rushed into Pittman's little office.

"They've got Ben!" he announced. "What's he charged with?"

"Stealing ten sacks of coal," Attorney Pittman, who was about that time almost down to "hard pan" financially, was told.

"You prove he's not guilty?" Pittman asked diplomatically.

"Sure, plenty of witnesses," was the instant reply.

"Well, I'll take the case, only somebody's got to come across with money this time," the attorney decided.

"Well," returned the author. "We've got no money, but we'll give you half the coal."

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which Representative White gives for his peregrinations in the land where "the livid tundras keep their tryst with the tranquil snows," and after two years and a half among the rigors of Dawson City's early days, he came back to the states with a good sized poke of gold, as well as a parallel to Senator Pittman's shooting of the White Horse Rapids, for the young Ohioan also established a precedent. He and his partner, E. E. Andrews, of Delavan, N. Y., were the first to take a barnyard animal over dread Chilkoot Pass.

In at the death of that ignominy of Skagway's early history "Sour George," Mr. White, then but twenty-six years old, soon after, started over the Chilkoot.

"Not even a sheep could go unaided over the Chilkoot in those days," Mr. White said. "But that didn't deter Andrews from conceiving the wild notion that the only way we could hope for heaven or reward was through the purchase of a decrepit ox, one of the only two in Skagway."

"The little intimate details of chamber-maiding that old boyne reprobate over the trail makes me weep even yet. When he'd break his moorings and upset several of the Mushers and their packs, Andrews and I would be just about as popular as mealie microbes in an orphan asylum."

"But we finally got old 'Pay Dirt' over the divide, and just in time, at that, to escape the snowslide from which we afterward took half a hundred bodies."

"Once on the other side, though, Pay Dirt became a bonanza all in himself. By loading him down—and he could haul as much as we could carry—we sometimes made \$50 or \$60 a day out of him."

"On the shore of Lake Bennett, where we made our barge, I revolted at my duties of chambermaid to the old fellow. But Andrews wouldn't hear of butchering him. He'd make us a lot of money, and he's more than 'valued' to us. He'll be still more valuable in Dawson City."

"By that time the half ton of moldy hay which we had acquired with the old fellow had been exhausted, and, to keep him from starving, we began to divide our baked beans with him. Before we'd reached Dawson City he'd munch baked navies or rice just the same as we did."

"I didn't much like the prospect of setting out across the lakes with the full grown ancient member of the Avroch family as a shipmate, but Andrews stuck to his stand and I and he agreed, with the result that after a voyage that 'Pay Dirt' very successfully kept from being monotonous, we reached Dawson City and butchered him. He brought us \$1,250 in dust."

"Twice Representative White narrowly missed death in the wilds; once soon after arriving at Dawson, when he was thrown into the swollen river from a broken log raft, to be dragged out unconscious; and again when, the following winter, he went on a stampede to the Dominion Divide, became separated from his companions and was lost. Mr. White's claim was on the 'bench' above famous

Elidocad creek, and he struck it rich on his first claim.

"Scurry?" asked the representative in reply to a question. "I never had it. Oh, the boys used to sit around of Sunday and feel their teeth to see if they were loosening, and that was a pleasant pastime, wasn't it? But I had been warned that lemons was a good preventive for the sickness. I followed the beverage all the way from \$1 a glass, made with one-half a lemon, to \$1.75. Then I had to quit."

Although he had "inside information" on the strike of 1898, when it was brought outside by Nash, Senator Lane did not go to Alaska until six years later. He

went first to Nome, where, taken with inflammatory rheumatism, he spent several months knocking about botanizing and recovering before he struck out for St. Michaels, and from there on a steamer to Fairbanks, where he prospected for many months before starting for Valdez, where a temperature of 65 below, by way of the Tanana river, across to the Big Delta, over another divide along the Big Delta river and down the Okeena (Rab-bit river) headwaters until he finally came to the government trail.

One of the best stories in Senator Lane's collection is that of how Fairbanks, Alaska, came into being.

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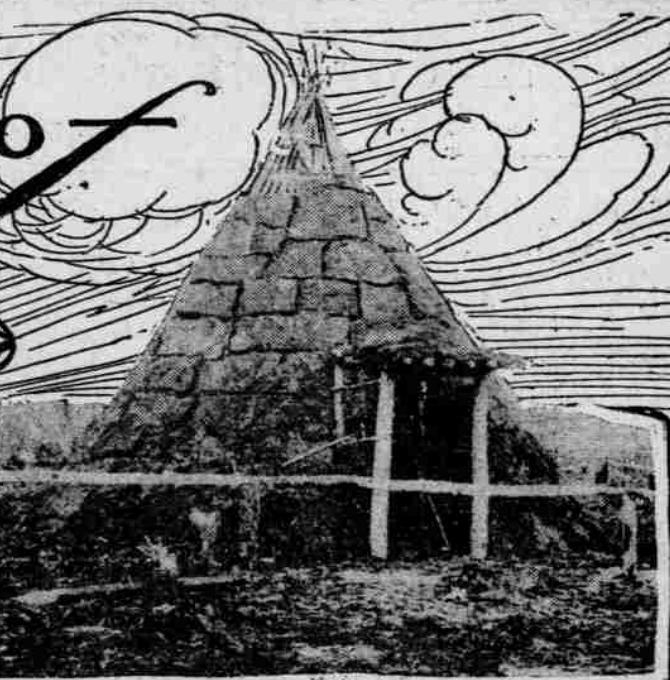
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"Nevertheless, they supplied Indian runners with a few stray nuggets they had, and started their settlement, so that when the stampede came, they might purchase the goods."

"On came the rush. And among the miners was one Frank Manly. He had just \$320, Bennett and Smith got this for grub and supplies. Then they sold him 'Discovery' claim, upon a contract calling for the payment of \$40,000 before the following 1st of August. A penalty of \$300 a day thereafter was attached until the claim should again revert to Bennett."

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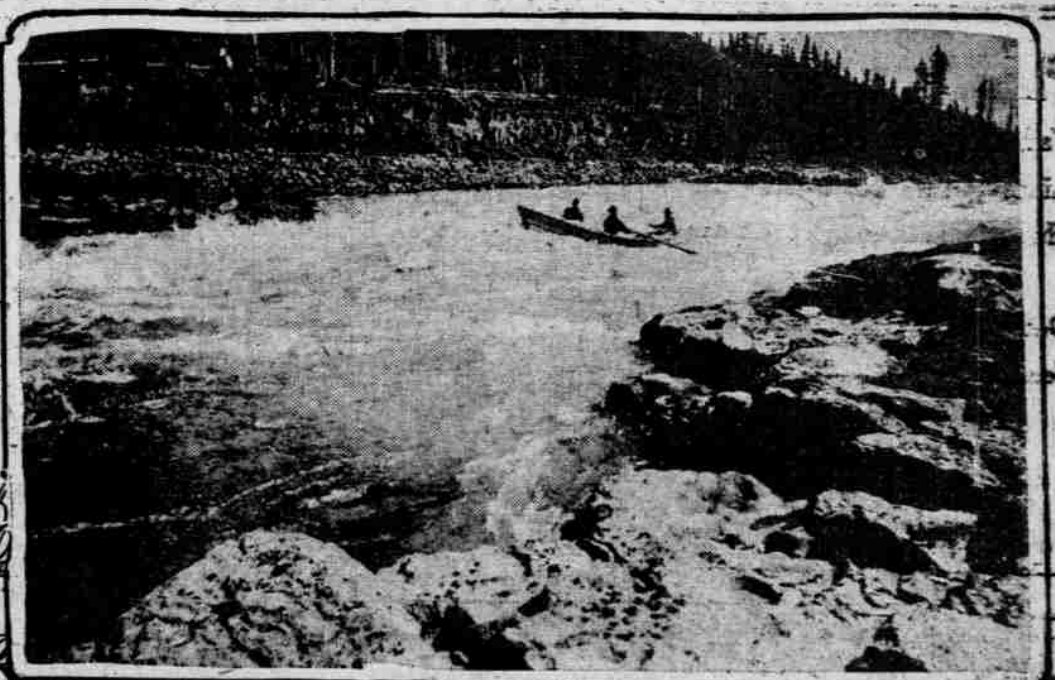
SENATOR HARRY LANE'S TIEP IN FAIRBANKS ALASKA WHEN HE PROSPECTED THERE



KEY PITTMAN AS THE YOUNG DISTRICT ATTORNEY AT NOME



PROSPECTOR GEO. WHITE, WITH HIS PAN



WHITE HORSE RAPIDS. SENATOR PITTMAN WAS THE FIRST TENDERFOOT TO SHOOT THEM



MRS. PITTMAN FIRST WOMAN FROM LEFT STARTS WITH A DOG TEAM FOR NOME FROM DAWSON CITY, A TRIP OF 2,200 MILES



CHILKOOT PASS OVER WHICH REPRESENTATIVE WHITE WAS THE FIRST TO TAKE, A BARNYARD ANIMAL

## UNDER THE BIG WHITE DOME

### "Little Rhody."

Senator Henry F. Lippitt of Rhode Island, though coming from the smallest state, has probably the largest purse in the Senate, his rating being \$15,000,000, enough to keep the wolf from the door for several weeks. Lippitt's family is one of the oldest in the country, his first ancestor having come to America in 1538, following Roger Williams, and this John Lippitt obtained land in the original Providence plantations, the senator retaining some of this first grant in his family to this day. The Lippitts fought in all the American wars—Indian revolution, 1812, Mexican and civil wars. When a young man he studied the subject of dyes, and was the inventor of that color known over the world as "turkey-red," a shade which is not faded by either water or sun and used so extensively now in cotton fast goods.

The Lippitt mills at Manville are very near the boundary line between Massachusetts and Rhode Island. One day a man who was interested in manufacturing called on Lippitt and was shown through the huge factory by the senator. For a long time they tramped from room to room under the man, almost exhausted, dropped into a seat.

"I would like to ask you a question, senator," he remarked in a weak voice.

"All right," replied Lippitt.

"Well, I would like to know if we are in Massachusetts or still in Rhode Island after our walk?"

### Saving His Bullet.

Senator Ashurst, himself an ex-cowboy, is filled to overflowing with good cowboy yarns, and among his friends is frequently called upon to tell what they call the "wild west" stories.

One of his stories rehearses the experiences of a cowboy who had a grudge with a man in town named Jim Smith and had resolved to get him expeditiously and effectively. He rode into town one day and, in anticipation of the exercise, took a little more and a little more, and in a little while his grudge had extended from the single individual to the whole wide world.

He went forth to battle or to die. And the first person who happened to cross his blazoned path was "ting Lee," a Chinese laundryman. In a moment the cowboy had yanked out his young cannon and let fly. Hing Lee subsided to the roadway in a heap, uttering shrill yapping sounds.

The report of the revolver and the fall of Hing Lee brought the cowboy to himself.

"Gosh!" he said, regretfully, as he gazed at the smoking pistol he held in his hand. "That was the bullet I was savin' particular for Jim Smith."

### The Salmon Party.

Representative J. A. Falconer is about to enter the race for senator from his state, though he is now just serving his first term in the House. He is a Canadian by birth, his parents coming from Ontario to this country when he was but four years of age.

Falconer is a great salmon country, where thousands gain a living by catching the fish, canning them and shipping all over the world. It is the habit of the salmon to come in "big runs" every four years, and these are flush times at the canneries.

One day Falconer was standing on the dock at Seattle when a friend, who lived in Alaska, happened by and asked him about things in general and politics in particular.

"I hear you have the bull moose party down here," remarked the friend, "but we can beat you up in Alaska—we have the salmon party up there."

"The salmon party? How's that?" asked Falconer with interest.

"Oh," replied the Alaskan, "it's what you folks down here call the democratic. Up there we have named it the salmon because every four years they make a big run and then we can them."

### A Wonderful Echo.

Senator Charles S. Thomas of Colorado delights to tell this joke on his own beloved Rocky mountains:

"We have the most wonderful scenery in the world out in Colorado," he enthuses the senator, "and our canyons and gorges are marvelous of nature's handiwork. As for our echoes—listen to this:

"A guide was taking a party of tourists by coach through the mountains west of Denver. As they descended the side of a steep canyon he halted the coach and ordered his party to alight. Then, ranging them up along the roadside, he spoke:

"In this canyon, ladies and gentlemen, is the most remarkable echo in the state; indeed, probably the most wonderful in the United States, and, possibly, in the world. Now, listen!"

"Forming his hands like a megaphone, he shouted across the empty void of the canyon:

"Hello-o-o-o-o!"

"In a few seconds there came from the opposite side of the canyon in tones like a human voice the reply:

"Hello-o-o-o-o!"

"What are you doing over there?"

"And from the tangled thicket that clothed the opposite wall the echo answered:

"None o' your business!"

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required amount in specie. I went back up the river with him; when he arrived he found he had lost \$30,000 more, but as the mine was then paying \$300 a day, that didn't cause him much worry."

Just about the time that Key Pittman, as district attorney of the consent government of Nome, had completed the rout of the grafters who were jumping claims and robbing the prospectors with a high-handed lawlessness, Judge James Wickersham, now delegate from Alaska, was appointed federal judge for the Nome district. Strictly speaking, the judge is not a "sourdough," having done little prospecting on his own hook. But he exercised his judicial functions in the territory during the days when law, in order had not quite become the recognized authority, and his first act, the collection of every scrap of information which has ever been printed about the land of his adoption.

Improving the Potato.

FRENCH agricultural experts have decided that the potato, that standard food of the western hemisphere, needs rejuvenation. The common practice in raising new potatoes is to cut up old ones and plant them. After a series of experiments the scientists have come to the conclusion that the continual reproduction of the potato without the use of seed has resulted in its deterioration, on the same theory that the infbreeding of animals will result in their deterioration.

Hence they have, with the aid of certain fungus, begun the planting of crop which has so far shown itself practically immune from potato diseases. It was at first thought that the potato could be improved if raised from seed. This process, however, proved too slow and weary.

The new fungus process will probably be adopted by other countries.

Hats Off, Boys!

MRS. CHARLES H. ANTHONY, the Muncie woman who, with fifteen trunk loads of gowns of her own design has gone to Europe to teach the European dressmakers a lesson, said in a restaurant of the steamer:

"The American woman is the best dressed woman in the world. And the American man is the best dressed man in the world—a fact so well recognized in Europe that he doesn't have to over there with fifteen trunks to establish his claim."

"Yes, in dress as in morals, the American man leads."

And how splendid his morals are! "A girl sculptor from the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts was travelling in the wilds of the west alone."

"But aren't you afraid to travel unprotected?" an English rancher asked her.

"No, oh, no," she answered. "I don't travel unprotected. I never venture beyond the call of the American gentleman."